



PTILOPUS FLAVIVENTRIS *moder*

PTILOTIS FLAVIGULA, *Gould.*

Yellow-throated Honey-eater.

Ptilotis flavigula, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VI. p. 24 ; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS fine and conspicuous species of *Ptilotis* is abundant in all the ravines round Hobart Town, and is very generally dispersed over the whole of Van Diemen's Land, to which island I believe it to be exclusively confined, for I neither observed it myself nor have I met with any example in the numerous collections I have received from South Australia and New South Wales. It is very animated and sprightly in its disposition, extremely quick in its actions, elegant in its form, and graceful in all its movements ; but as its colouring assimilates in a remarkable degree with that of the leaves of the trees it frequents, it is somewhat difficult of detection. When engaged in searching for food it frequently expands its wings and tail, creeps and clings among the branches in a variety of beautiful attitudes, and often suspends itself to the extreme ends of the outermost twigs ; it occasionally perches on the dead branches of the highest trees, but is mostly to be met with in the dense thickets. It flies in an undulating manner like a Woodpecker, but this power is rarely exercised.

Its note is a full, loud, powerful and melodious call.

The stomach is muscular, but of a very small size, and the food consists of bees, wasps and other Hymenoptera, to which are added Coleoptera of various kinds, and the pollen of flowers.

It is a very early breeder, as proved by my finding a nest containing two young birds covered with black down and about two days old, on the 28th of September.

The nest of this species, which is generally placed in a low bush, differs very considerably from those of all the other Honey-eaters with which I am acquainted, particularly in the character of the material forming the lining ; it is the largest and warmest of the whole, and is usually formed of ribbons of stringy bark, mixed with grass and the cocoons of spiders ; towards the cavity it is more neatly built, and is lined internally with opossum or kangaroo fur ; in some instances the hair-like material at the base of the large leaf-stalks of the tree-fern is employed for the lining, and in others there is merely a flooring of wiry grasses and fine twigs. The eggs, which are either two or three in number, are of the most delicate fleshy buff, rather strongly but thinly spotted with small, roundish, prominent dots of chestnut-red, intermingled with which are a few indistinct dots of purplish grey ; their average length is eleven lines, and breadth eight lines.

The only external difference in the sexes is the smaller size of the female, which is nearly a third less than that of the male.

Lores and cheeks black ; crown of the head, ear-coverts, breast and under surface dark grey, with silvery reflexions ; a few of the ear-coverts tipped with yellow ; chin and upper part of the throat rich gamboge-yellow ; all the upper surface, wings and tail rich yellowish olive, brightest on the margins of the quill- and tail-feathers ; inner webs of the primaries and secondaries dark brown ; under surface of the shoulder and wing gamboge-yellow ; abdomen and flanks washed with olive ; bill black ; interior of the bill, throat and tongue rich orange ; irides wood-brown ; legs and feet brownish lead-colour.

The young birds assume the adult colouring from the time they leave the nest.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size.